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ABSTRACT

This final report describes activities and accomplishments of Alaska's 3-year program on services for children and youth with dual sensory impairments. The project provided personalized technical assistance to local education agencies, to infant learning programs, and to other educators. It also provided support and training to families of children with deaf-blindness. Primary services provided by the project were early identification of infants, children, and youth with deaf-blindness, the development and maintenance of in-state expertise, consultation and training to parents, consultation and technical assistance to service providers throughout the state, support for transition planning, dissemination of information about deaf-blindness and resources to service providers and families, collection of census data of students with deaf-blindness, and technical assistance for educating children with deaf-blindness in the least restrictive environment. Ongoing coordination and interagency collaboration occurred with public, private, local, and national resources. This report describes the project's conceptual framework and justification, goals and objectives, activities and accomplishments, problems, evaluation, and impact. Appendices include workshops and training evaluative data, results of satisfaction surveys, action plan follow-up data, and a sample newsletter. (CR)

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Alaska Dual Sensory Impairment Services

Final Performance Report
October 1, 1995 to September 30, 1999

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Special Education Programs
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Executive Summary

Alaska Dual Sensory Impairment (DSI) Services provided *personalized* technical assistance to local education agencies, infant learning programs, and others responsible for educating children with deaf-blindness throughout Alaska. *Personalized* support and training was also available to families with children who are deaf-blind. Services provided by this project were accomplished through a subcontract with the Special Education Service Agency (SESA) through the Alaska Department of Education.

To meet the needs of service providers and families, technical assistance was often provided in local communities. In addition, technical assistance was provided through coordinating conference workshops and courses, providing topical newsletters and other mailings, offering telephone consultation, and organizing coordination and collaboration among service recipients. The primary goals of the grant were:

1. to provide technical assistance to parents, local education agencies, infant learning programs, and organizations providing services to children with deaf-blindness;

2. to implement procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of the technical assistance; and,

3. to coordinate services with other agencies serving children with deaf-blindness.

Through DSI technical assistance, families and services providers had opportunities to enhance their knowledge about deaf-blindness. As a result, children with deaf-blindness in Alaska had access to services, people, and resources who understood the unique learning needs resulting from dual sensory impairments.

I. Project Context

This proposal was submitted for funding under section 307.11, State and Multi-State Projects for Children Who are Deaf-Blind. The Alaska Department of Education, through the Special Education Service Agency (SESA), proposed a single state technical assistance project for all children in Alaska identified as deaf-blind. The proposed project was titled "Alaska Dual Sensory Impairments (DSI) Services."

DSI Services provided technical assistance to local education agencies, infant learning programs, and others responsible for educating children with deaf-blindness throughout the state of Alaska. The project also provided support and training to families of identified deaf-blind children.

Services proposed in this project were accomplished through a subcontract with SESA, a public agency authorized by Alaska Statute AS 14.30.600 to provide outreach special education services for children with low incidence handicaps throughout Alaska.

When considering the contextual need for services of the DSI project, it is important to consider the geographic size of Alaska, its sparse population, and its challenging terrain. Alaska is geographically the largest state in the United States. It is more than twice the size of Texas and ranks 50th in population per square mile. There are approximately 285 communities widely scattered over 591,004 square miles. The largest city in the state is Anchorage, which encompasses approximately one-half of the state's total population of about 621,000 residents. The other half of the population lives in significantly smaller towns or villages scattered throughout the interior and along the coast. Limited road systems, weather conditions, and challenging terrain make most smaller communities only accessible by airplane.

Children with deaf-blindness reside in urban, rural, and remote areas of the state. Travel to all sites outside of Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna Valley is done by air, including travel in small, single engine planes, often on flats or skis. It is not atypical for

travel to remote sites to require four hours of air travel, without considering the likely potential of a lay-over due to variable weather conditions. The challenging Alaskan environment and the small number of children with deaf-blindness spread throughout the state combine to create an isolation for families and service providers which is not be duplicated in any other part of the United States.

Communities in Alaska contain a diverse mix of individuals with various cultural backgrounds, including Native American, Russian, Asian, and individuals who have moved from other parts of the United States. The Native American population consists of Inupiat and Y'upik Eskimos; Aleuts; Athabascans; and, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian Indians. Together they represent seven major languages with over fifty significantly different dialects. Associated with these vastly different cultures are corresponding variances in lifestyles, traditions, and economics.

In Alaska, as in the rest of the United States, there is a shortage of special education personnel. This shortage is even more substantial with teachers trained in low incidence disabilities (LID), including deaf-blindness. Most rural/remote school districts do not have sufficient numbers of LID identified children to justify hiring a specialist. Nor are there many opportunities in Alaska to acquire specialized skills except at inservice levels. None of the universities in Alaska offer teacher training in areas of deaf-blindness, deafness, blindness, or severe needs. The distance of Alaska from the contiguous United States precludes casual access to ongoing educational opportunities. As a result, training opportunities must be actively sought and made available in Alaska.

To meet the needs of service providers[1] and families[2], the DSI project provided technical assistance in local communities, whenever possible. Although travel was both costly and time consuming, it was one of the preferred methods of receiving technical assistance. Site visits also allowed project staff to consider the culture of each individual

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[1] Services providers will be used to refer to teachers, paraprofessionals, support service personnel, and others who provide a service to individuals with deaf-blindness.

[2] Families will be used to refer to birth parent(s), adoptive parents, extended family member(s), or other(s) who are primary care provider(s) for the individual with deaf-blindness.

community, work directly with the local personnel in designing individual, comprehensive, educational services.

Technical assistance was also provided through coordinating conference workshops and courses specific to deaf-blindness. Each year at least one statewide training was provided in Anchorage with nationally known presenters addressing topics such as: INSITE training, using touch cues and signals, Hand-In-Hand training, routines and functional activities as the context for teaching, encouraging vision and compensatory skills, curriculum adaptations for inclusive settings, and active learning approaches. As the grant progressed, it became clear that trainings needed to encourage home and school team partnering so that teams could develop and implement action plans based on the information they learned together at the trainings. Stipends were provided to families and service providers to assist in travel and registration costs, with priority given to team attendance.

In addition to providing technical assistance through site visits and trainings, technical assistance was also provided through mailings, telephone and email contact, an extensive lending library, and coordination and collaboration among service recipients. By providing an array of technical assistance options, service providers and families were able to choose a method which best met their needs and the needs of the child(ren) with deaf-blindness.

II. Project Description

The following describes DSI grant accomplishments, outcomes and challenges for each of the project's activities.

Objective 1.1: To identify infants, children, and youth with deaf-blindness and to increase their early identification

Activities:

1.1.1 ***Send letters, brochures, and eligibility criteria to all Infant Learning Programs (ILP), Local Education Agencies (LEAs), pediatricians, and other related agencies and service providers.***

Accomplishments: Letters, brochures, program criteria, and/or census information were mailed annually to approximately 54 special education administrators, 84 pediatricians, and 26 infant learning program (ILP) administrators. Other related agencies and service providers were provided this information whenever inquiries were made about the project.

Outcomes and Challenges: Approximately 164 professionals received information concerning DSI Services in mass mailing each fall. No referrals were known to have resulted from these mailings. However, it served as a way to disseminate information. During fall 1999, as this grant cycle ended, a statewide mailing to all ILPs was completed in the new grant cycle.

1.1.2 ***Provide follow-up phone calls or other personalized contact to ILPs and LEAs at sites where no children with deaf –blindness are reported.***

Accomplishments: This activity was discontinued in the first year. Due to staff travel and the difficulties in reaching administrators by telephone, it was decided to prioritize personalized contact at statewide conferences and meetings instead.

1.1.3 ***Disseminate information at the Special Education Directors' conference***

Accomplishments: Each year during the annual Special Education Director's conference, an overview of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA), including DSI Services, was provided. Referral packets were disseminated to district special education directors.

Outcomes and Challenges: Both new special education directors and previous directors were provided information about DSI Services and how to make a referral as part of SESA services. Approximately 50-55 directors or other special education

professionals received this information on an annual basis. No known referrals were made to DSI from this process. However, it served as a means for information dissemination.

1.1.4 ***Disseminate information at the Infant Learning Program Conference***

Accomplishments: During the annual Infant Learning Conference, information about DSI Services and the deaf-blind census was disseminated to ILP administrators and service providers.

Outcomes and Challenges: Information was disseminated annually to an estimated 35-45 participants regarding DSI Services. No known referrals were made to DSI from this process. However, it served as a means for information dissemination.

1.1. 5 ***Provide technical assistance and training to service providers regarding screening and identifying infants, children, and youth with deaf-blindness***

Accomplishments: To assist service providers with screening and identifying infants, children, and youth with deaf-blindness, technical assistance was provided through information dissemination and trainings. Information was disseminated about identifying children with deaf-blindness through: (1) mailings to service providers concerning who qualifies as deaf-blind; (2) awareness sessions at conferences, trainings, and meetings; (3) ongoing interactions with service providers about screening and identifying children with deaf-blindness.

Outcomes and Challenges: Technical assistance was provided throughout the grant cycle to service providers through information dissemination about deaf-blindness identifiers and through trainings. During this grant cycle, the number of children identified with deaf-blindness increased by 45%, from 20 to 29 children. These new referrals partially resulted from an increased awareness regarding what constitutes deaf-blindness and through personal contacts.

1.1.6 ***Develop a statewide screening program for Usher Syndrome***

Accomplishments: Since the initial statewide training for the Usher Screening Program occurred in 1994, three school districts and two itinerant teachers (serving rural/remote sites) completed screening for their deaf and hard of hearing students.

Approximately 103 children in rural/remote and urban sites were screened for indicators of Usher Syndrome and/or other visual needs. Anchorage School District (ASD) professionals developed a thorough vision screening model where a team screened approximately fifty-five (55) students at the Alaska State School For The Deaf. Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD) screened their students and requested additional assistance with two students who had questionable responses. Contact was made with their local vision teacher to assist in screening these students. The teacher of the deaf in the Lower Kuskokwim School District and the itinerant teachers serving

rural/remotes sites completed screening for their students and did not request additional assistance.

Outcomes and Challenges: Approximately 103 children in rural/remote and urban sites were screened for indicators of Usher and/or other vision concerns as a result of the Usher Screening Program. Anchorage School District, serving approximately half of Alaska's population, developed and implemented a thorough vision screening program by a team of professionals. Although no children were identified with Usher Syndrome, other suspected vision needs were identified and awareness concerning Usher and other vision needs increased.

The greatest challenge in conducting a statewide screening was that some of the professionals originally trained to conduct the screening left their districts or did not have the time to conduct the screenings. As a result, not all of the professionals trained followed up and conducted screenings.

1.1.7 ***Collect deaf-blind census data and report to NTAC (TRACES)***

Accomplishments: In an effort to assure that every child with deaf-blindness is reported, multiple contact points were made with key stakeholders. These contacts included: (1) census forms with a cover letter explaining the importance of identifying every child with deaf-blindness were mailed to special education directors and infant learning program directors; (2) overviews about the DSI census were presented at various conferences; (3) follow-up letters with copies of completed census forms were sent to sites serving children with deaf-blindness for service providers to review and update; (4) meetings, discussions, and reconciling of census counts between DSI Services, the Part C Coordinator and the Alaska Department of Education concerning coordinating efforts in collecting this data. In FY 99, DSI revised and distributed the census form to include the new data requested by NTAC. Census data was reported annually to NTAC in a timely manner.

Outcomes and Challenges: Throughout the grant, efforts were continually revised and improved to assure that every child with deaf-blindness was counted in Alaska. Although census numbers of children with deaf-blindness has increased during the course of the grant, it is suspected there are still some unidentified children. Continued awareness regarding the qualifiers of deaf-blindness continues to be an important strategy with assisting in identification.

Objective 1.2: To develop and maintain in-state expertise

1.2.1 ***Survey families and service providers regarding expertise needs***

Accomplishments: The following methods were used to survey families and service providers regarding their needs: (1) programs serving children with deaf-blindness were contacted annually and needs were discussed; (2) technical assistance agreements, including assistance options, were completed by staff serving children with

deaf-blindness; (3) prior to site visits, programs and typically families were contacted and specific needs were defined; (4) following each site visit, a Quick Response Survey was sent to the school district or program to assure specified needs were met; (5) other various surveys were developed during the grant cycle (e.g. conference topics and speaker requests, etc.) and sent to families and/or service providers; and, (6) at the end of the school year, consumer satisfaction surveys were mailed to families and service providers.

Outcomes and Challenges: Families and service providers had multiple opportunities to indicate their needs. The challenge with conducting surveys is getting responses back. In the 1999-2003 grant, telephone surveying will be considered as another means to follow-up with those who are less likely to respond to written surveys.

1.2.2 ***Coordinate site visit exchanges, peer coaching, and collaborative workshop presentations among service providers***

Accomplishments: The following summarizes the types of activities which occurred during the grant cycle:

•workshop presentations: DSI staff coordinated local expertise to provide trainings at statewide conferences including topics in vision screening, cortical vision impairments, and understanding hearing losses.

•site visit exchanges: DSI staff assisted in coordinating site visit exchanges when service providers from rural sites were passing through hub sites (Anchorage and Juneau).

•peer coaching: key contact persons were identified in each district/site. These individuals were typically deaf-blind specialists, vision teachers, or special education teachers. They became the source to disseminate information sent by DSI Services and coordinated DSI visits. As a result, they developed more of an expertise or coaching role, if they did not already have that responsibility.

• collaborative trainings and site visits: DSI maximized resources by providing joint site visits and trainings with other SESA specialists (i.e., Vision/O&M specialist, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) specialist, and Infant specialist), as well as with those from other agencies.

Outcomes and Challenges: DSI Services utilized in-state expertise to build local capacity and enhance technical assistance and training. Such utilization of expertise also served as a means to maximize resources and collaboration where otherwise such expertise may be limited.

1.2.3 ***Send service providers to relevant state and national conferences and trainings***

Accomplishments: Throughout the grant cycle, stipends were provided to service providers to attend: (1) workshops/courses during statewide conferences such as the Pathways Conference and the Statewide Special Education Conference (ASSEC) and (2) national conferences and trainings.

Outcomes and Challenges: Approximately 91 stipends (including registration, travel/per diem) were provided to service providers so that they could enhance their understanding about deaf-blindness and related topics. The challenge in sending service providers to trainings and courses, whether in state or outside, was high travel cost. However, by coordinating with other agencies such as NTAC, stipends were made available to service providers. Providing travel stipends made attendance possible for service providers who may not have attended without support.

1.2.4 ***Obtain agreements from those who attend trainings and conferences that subsequently, they must disseminate training/conference information learned***

Accomplishments: To receive stipend assistance, dissemination plans had to be completed by service providers, describing how they planned to disseminate training/conference materials. In addition to dissemination plans, action plans were completed by each person or team. These plans identified what plan of action the participant/team would take upon returning to their service site.

Outcomes and Challenges: Dissemination plans included contributing articles to the DSI newsletter, sharing information and materials with colleagues and families, and/or providing inservices to colleagues. Articles and letters were published in the DSI newsletter; however, DSI staff typically did not follow-up with service providers as to whether they actually disseminated the information as indicated. Action plan follow-up cards were created to specifically assist DSI in identifying outcomes from the trainings/action plans.

Objective 1.3: To provide personalized consultation, technical assistance, and training to service providers involved with infants, children, and youth

1.3.1 ***Write Technical Assistance Agreements with all districts and agencies serving infants, children, and youth with deaf-blindness***

Accomplishments: Technical Assistance Agreements (TAAs) were given to the programs or agencies serving learners with deaf-blindness in order to clarify general needs and expectations.

Outcomes and Challenges: TAAs were used throughout the grant cycle and often required follow-up to assure they were completed. Unless there were changes in key staff or administration, or a new site was added, the ongoing use of TAAs became more of a task than a benefit. The most beneficial means for obtaining accurate accounts of technical assistance needs was through ongoing communication with sites and pre-site visit questionnaires.

1.3.2 ***Write follow-up reports in a timely manner after site visits***

Accomplishments: During the grant cycle, approximately 72 site visits were made to schools and programs throughout Alaska. The follow-up timeline for reports was within two weeks after a site visit.

Outcomes and Challenges: Recipients typically received information in a timely manner after a site visit. Occasionally, reports went out slightly later as a result of staff travel or other time critical deadlines. Administration supported adjusted work schedules or working at home on a pre-approved basis, to assist staff in meeting deadlines.

1.3.3 ***Coordinate with the student's multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary team in the development of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), the Individualized Education Program (IEP), and Individual Transition Plan (ITP)***

Accomplishments: When requested by students' teams, DSI staff coordinated with the multi-disciplinary/transdisciplinary teams and/or attended IFSP, IEP and/or ITP meetings. Some of these meetings also included MAPs planning sessions. Staff also provided inservice trainings for school district teams as children transitioned from infant learning programs. In addition, staff assisted in reviewing assessments, provided assessment information, and assisted in developing goals and objectives for individual plans.

Outcomes and Challenges: DSI staff coordinated with the multi-disciplinary/transdisciplinary teams and/or attended approximately 17 IFSP, IEP and/or ITP meetings. The outcome of having DSI staff involved was to assist teams in considering the unique learning conditions for children with deaf-blindness. The challenge was that because our services are upon request, some teams may not have requested assistance and may have benefited from our participation.

1.3.4 ***Offer training to service providers on site, regionally, or at statewide conferences***

Accomplishments: DSI Services provided a variety of trainings on site, regionally, and statewide. Many of these trainings were presented by leading experts in deaf-blindness. In addition, selected service providers also had the opportunity to attend some of the national conferences and workshops. The following includes some of these training opportunities:

Local or regional trainings

- The Effects of Prenatal Exposure to Alcohol on Children with Sensory Impairments (Homer, 1996)
- Planning for Children with Dual Sensory Impairments (Fairbanks, 1997)
- Planning for Individuals with Deafblindness (Juneau 1997)

Statewide Trainings/Courses

- INSITE Training I (Pathways Conference, 1995)
- Communicating Using Touch Cues and Signals (Pathways Conference, 1995)
- INSITE Training II (ASSEC Conference 1996)
- Planning Communication Systems for Learners with DSI (ASSEC Conference, 1996)
- Hand In Hand Training (Summer Academy, 1996)
- Do You Hear What I Hear? (Pathways Conference, 1997)
- Do You See What I See? (Pathways Conference, 1997)
- Understanding Cortical Vision Impairments (Pathways Conference, 1997)
- Routines and Functional Activities: The Context for Teaching (ASSEC, 1997)
- Assessing Vision in Deaf/Hard of Hearing Children (ASSEC, 1997)
- A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words (ASSEC, 1997)
- Encouraging Visual & Compensatory Skills in Children with Multiple Disabilities, Including Vision and Hearing Losses (ASSEC, 1998)
- Curriculum Adaptations for Inclusive Settings (ASSEC, 1999)
- Active Learning for Individuals with Multiple Disabilities: Innovative Interventions from Denmark (Summer, 1999)

National training opportunities

- Perkins Summer Institute (1996)
- Transition Planning/TRACES (1996)
- Seamless Service Delivery/NTAC (1997)
- National Deafblind Conference (1997)

Outcomes and Challenges: Service providers had numerous opportunities to attend trainings with nationally and internationally respected presenters. Since there are no preservice training programs in deaf-blindness, deafness, blindness, or multiple disabilities, such inservice training played a critical role in assisting service providers learn about effective practices for learners with dual sensory impairments.

1.3.5 ***Provide technical assistance and training through both distance and direct methods, including teleconferences***

Accomplishments: Direct technical assistance during the grant cycle included approximately: (1) 72 site visits; (2) 14 statewide trainings/courses; (3) 6 regional/local workshops; (4) sponsorships or co-sponsorships to attend NTAC Workshops and/or *National Conference on Deafblindness*; (5) annual DSI networking socials during the ASSEC conference. Distance technical assistance included: (1) ongoing availability through telecommunication and e-mail; (2) a web link on the SESA homepage including referral information and common questions about deaf-blindness and the project; (3) mailings, including the biannual production of the DSI newsletter *Keeping in Touch.*

Outcomes and Challenges: Service providers had opportunities to increase their knowledge concerning specific topics about deaf-blindness through both direct and distance methods. During the course of the grant, e-mail use and availability increased and served as a valuable means for establishing and maintaining contact.

Objective 1.4: To provide personalized consultation, training, and technical assistance to families

1.4.1. ***Provide individual consultation and trainings to families***

Accomplishments: Newly referred families typically received an initial consultation visit from DSI staff. Resource binders were provided with information concerning local and national resources in deaf-blindness. After the initial consultation, individual consultations were available on an ongoing basis, as requested. In addition, training opportunities were provided to parents and included approximately: (1) 2 stipends to attend *The National Conference on Deafblindness* in Washington, DC; (2) in coordination with NTAC/NFADB 5 stipends to Alaskan family members or guardians to attend national trainings; and (3) 51 stipends to family members/guardians to attend statewide conferences and trainings. In addition, telephone contact, emails, and mailings were ongoing.

Outcomes and Challenges: Families had a variety of opportunities to increase their knowledge concerning specific issues about deaf-blindness through consultation services, technical assistance, and attending trainings. Some family members participated in nearly all the technical assistance opportunities and other families preferred less involvement. Opportunities however, were available and family members had an array of options that fit their needs.

1.4.2 ***Provide trainings or workshops to families in conjunction with the statewide parent conference***

Outcome: The statewide parent conference, Pathways, occurred every other year. During this grant cycle, it occurred twice (1995 and 1997). DSI provided trainings specific to deaf-blindness at both of these conferences. In addition, DSI co-hosted a luncheon with the Alaska Association of Parents of Children with Visual Impairments during both of these conferences.

Outcomes and Challenges: There were 11 family members/guardians of children with deaf-blindness that attended the Pathways Conferences. Because of the diversity of children with deaf-blindness it is not possible to provide a training that will address the spectrum of issues. However, at Pathways there seemed to be something for everyone.

1.4.3 ***Provide support for parents to attend the statewide parent conference or other relevant parent activity***

Accomplishments: Stipend applications were sent to every family so they could apply for support to attend statewide and national conferences occurring during the grant cycle, including: (1) Pathways Conference; (2) *The National Conference on Deafblindness;* and, *(3)* Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference. Stipends included course registration and travel/lodging costs for families flying into Anchorage for statewide conferences. In addition, DSI coordinated with NTAC and NFADB in recommending assistance to selected family members to attend two national parent meetings.

Outcomes and Challenges: During the grant cycle, approximately 58 stipends were provided to family members/guardians of children with deaf-blindness so that they could attend trainings and conferences. All families who applied for assistance to attend statewide conferences and courses were provided stipends. Such activities afforded parents the opportunities to network with others and to learn current, effective practices. The high travel cost in Alaska was a challenge. However, by coordinating with other agencies, such as PARENTS, NFADB and NTAC, travel stipends were available to families.

Objective 1.5: To assist with effective transition services for infants, children, and youth with deaf-blindness

1.5.1 ***Assist with the transition of services from home to LEAs to community services***

Accomplishments: Assistance with transition services included the following: (1) facilitating MAPS sessions for transition age students; (2) participating in IEP/ITP meetings of transition age students; (3) disseminating assessment and planning information for transition age students; (4) identifying and coordinating with key stakeholders to attend an NTAC sponsored workshop on seamless service delivery in Reno, Nevada; (5) coordinating an interagency planning meeting and training with key stakeholders specifically designed to impact transition services for a transition age student; (6) securing funding from Helen Keller National to co-support the independent living coordinator (previously the Deaf-Blind Affiliate representative) to attend the interagency meeting; (7) assisting with the transition process of one adolescent student who moved to another state through coordinating with the receiving state's deaf-blind program and writing letters documenting that student's placement needs; (8) assisting and working with community and adult service programs involved with transition age student(s); and, (9) providing trainings to school teams and families as infants transitioned out of infant learning programs.

Outcomes and Challenges: LEAs and other agencies received training, assistance, and germane information as their learners with deaf-blindness reached transition age. Efforts were made to assist agencies and LEAs in understanding the special needs of learners with deaf-blindness.

1.5.2 ***Inform families of appropriate community, state, national, and international resources concerning transitioning***

Accomplishments: DSI staff informed families about transition resources through: (1) facilitating MAPs sessions which included parent involvement; (2) assisting families in linking up with community service agencies and national resources; (3) forwarding mailings about transition related information to families; (4) disseminating information about the Helen Keller National Center and including it on exchange of information forms as children reached transition age; (5) assisting one family as their adolescent child transitioned to a new school in a different state by identifying local resources, including putting the family in contact with that state's deaf-blind program; (6) providing newly referred families with a resource binder that included local and national resources; (7) providing support so that two (2) parents could attend the *National Conference on Deafblindness* and assisting a third parent in securing a scholarship through NTAC; and, (8) coordinating with NTAC/NFADB so that selected parents could attend national parent trainings.

Outcomes and Challenges: Families were provided various types of information and assistance to help them learn about transition resources and options. Some families chose to access resources and others did not.

1.5.3 ***Coordinate with LEAs, families, Deaf-Blind Affiliate, Helen Keller National Center regional representatives, and other adult service programs to develop transition goals and identify appropriate community resources***

Accomplishments: DSI Services assisted with coordinating interagency services to develop transition planning through activities such as: (1) coordinating MAPS sessions (2) collaborating with Helen Keller National Center to secure funding for the independent living counselor (formally the Deaf-Blind Affiliate staff) to attend an interagency meeting specifically designed to impact services for a transition age student; (3) coordinating with NTAC to send a team of stakeholders to a training in Reno, Nevada; (4) coordinating an interagency stakeholders meeting after the NTAC meeting which was designed to improve interagency collaboration with transition age student(s); (5) meeting with community service agencies and LEAs to assist in coordinating appropriate transition programming; (6) co-presenting at an agency board meeting with representatives from Helen Keller National advocating the need to have an adult service provider for deaf-blind individuals in Alaska; and (7) disseminating information developed by the Alaska Transition Initiative to school district staff of transition age students.

Outcomes and Challenges: DSI coordinated with a variety of agencies and services to assist in providing appropriate transition goals and community supports. The challenge was that there is no longer a specialist for adult deaf-blind services in Alaska. This position was funded on seed money from Helen Keller National and has been vacant for approximately two years. Attempts are being made to identify an appropriate agency willing to support this position.

Objective 1.6: To disseminate information about deaf-blindness and available resources to service providers and families

1.6.1 ***Publish and distribute project newsletter***

Accomplishments: DSI Services produced a project newsletter, *Keeping In Touch*, twice a year throughout the grant cycle. Each issue included a topical focus, typically about an upcoming training topic. The newsletter was mailed to approximately 275 families and service providers and received positive reviews from its readers.

Outcomes and Challenges: The estimated 275 readers of *Keeping In Touch* received information regarding current deaf-blind practices, local, state, and national events, and articles from families and service providers. . The challenge was keeping an ever-expanding mailing list current. Each year the mailing list was reviewed and updated in an effort to keep it current.

1.6.2 ***Provide direct mailings and information packets to service providers and families***

Accomplishments: DSI Services routinely mailed to service providers general information available from various professional publications, (e.g., Deaf-Blind Perspectives, Deaf-Blind Link) listings of SESA's new acquisitions in the library, and conferences and training opportunities, etc. Families were also mailed information specific to their requested interest, such as national resources, announcements about local and national events. In addition, specific resource packets which might include videos, articles, texts, etc. were assembled and mailed as requested.

Outcomes and Challenges: Service providers and families were kept informed through routine mailings.

1.6.3 ***To maintain a lending library***

Accomplishments: SESA maintained an extensive lending library of reference materials (i.e., books, videos, adaptive materials and equipment) for parents and service providers, of which the DSI materials are a part. It is maintained by a librarian and is accessible through the SESA web site. Materials are cataloged onto the Library Works System using the Library of Congress headings and Dewy Decimal classification system. There are approximately 100 periodicals and more than 6,500 titles available at the SESA library. ERIC searches and inter-library loans are also available for specific requests.

Outcomes and Challenges: Resources were readily available to families and services providers.

Objective 1.7 To promote the education of all children with deaf-blindness in the least restrictive environment

1.7.1 ***Provide technical assistance regarding effective strategies for educating children with deaf-blindness in the least restrictive environment, including strategies for inclusive environments***

Accomplishments: DSI Services provided technical assistance for educating children in the least restrictive environment through the following activities: (1) the topic of *Keeping In Touch* (Spring/Summer, 1997) was inclusive education and included strategies for parents and professionals. It also contained a personal story written by a local parent whose child with deaf-blindness is being successfully included; (2) a two day course on Curriculum Adaptations for Inclusive Settings (ASSEC, 1999 was provided); and, (3) ongoing technical assistance through site visits and follow-up support regarding strategies to assist programs in educating the students in the least restrictive environments.

Outcomes and Challenges: Technical assistance regarding educating children with deaf-blindness in the least restrictive environment occurred throughout the grant through trainings, publications, and while on site.

Objective 2.1 To develop and implement procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of the Alaska Dual Sensory Impairment Project

2.1.1 ***Formative and summative evaluations will be used based on quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate the effectiveness of the services***

Accomplishments: The project was constantly collecting data and attempting to improve its means of data collection. The following formative and summative evaluations were used to evaluate the effectiveness of services: (1) activity documentation logs were kept to assist in documenting activities; (2) contact notes were kept to document phone calls and site contacts; (3) workshops, trainings, and courses were evaluated and typically used the same evaluation form so that they could be compared and collectively coded; (4) technical assistance agreements were completed by each program receiving services; (5) pre-site visit questionnaires were completed before site visits; (6) quick response surveys were mailed to sites after a site visit to assure site visit goals were met; (7) consumer satisfaction rating forms were mailed at the end of the school year to service providers and parents. These surveys also included input regarding future needs; (8) various questionnaires were used during the course of the grant to glean additional input from parents and service providers; (9) site visit reports were written after each site visit and qualitative changes were noted concerning the student or the student's program; (10) ongoing written reports were submitted to the DSI Advisory Board and the SESA Board of Directors regarding activities; and, (11) following statewide training, individuals/teams completed action plans which were followed-up with quick response cards to account for the impact of the training and action plans.

Outcomes and Challenges: The program's efficacy data continued to expand and improve throughout the grant. The data included both qualitative and quantitative reporting. The challenge was to account for specific child, family, and service impact data. Towards the end of the grant, impact data cards were developed to help account for the impact of the statewide trainings. Examples and results of the evaluative data are included in appendix.

Objective 3.1 To coordinate and collaborate with local, state, regional, and national resources

3.1.1 ***Maintain and utilize input from an advisory board***

Accomplishments: The DSI Advisory Board met twice a year throughout the grant and provided input regarding DSI Service goals and services.

Outcomes and Challenges: The project received input and advice from a cross-section of stakeholders. The challenge was that the Board meetings were held via teleconference because of high travel costs. Although this is a common means for meeting in Alaska, it does not afford direct face to face discourse.

3.1.2 ***Advisory board membership will represent all children who are deaf-blind and include representatives who can provide input at state decision-making levels***

Accomplishments: According to the DSI Board Bylaws, Board members include representation from infant learning program services, adult services, families, rural service providers, practitioners, administration, the State Department of Education, and an individual with a disability.

Outcomes and Challenges: The Advisory Board members represented a cross-section of stakeholders involved with children who have deaf-blindness. There were times during the course of the grant cycle when seats became vacant due to resignations or term completions. This was typically resolved in a timely manner with new appointments.

3.1.3 ***Disseminate information regarding the project activities to the advisory board***

Accomplishments: The Advisory Board received: (1) board updates informing them of DSI project activities; (2) meeting agendas prior to board meetings: (3) minutes following the board meeting; (4) DSI newsletters. New board members received an information binder which included DSI Board Bylaws, grant abstract, management plan, referral information, and minutes from the previous Board meeting.

Outcomes and Challenges: The Advisory Board remained informed of the project and its activities.

3.1.4 ***Coordinate with local and state agencies (e.g., LEAs, CSPD, Part H and Part B Programs, P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc., Alaska Deaf-Blind Affiliate Program, etc.)***

Accomplishments: Throughout the grant cycle, DSI Services coordinated and collaborated with local and state agencies as evidenced through activities, such as: (1) annual presentations and/or information dissemination at state infant learning conferences; (2) collaborating with local infant learning programs serving children with deaf-blindness; (3) coordinating with the Part C Coordinator (previously known as Part H Coordinator) to improve data collection for the federal deaf-blind census and child find; (4) coordinating with the Alaska Department of Education and the Director of Special Education regarding grant activities and status; (5) coordinating with representatives from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Division of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (DMHDD) of Developmental Disabilities, REACH, Independent Living Centers, local school district administration, and P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc. etc, to attend stakeholders meetings; (6) serving on CSPD as SESA representative; (7) coordinating with the Deaf-Blind Affiliate Program and advocating for its support after funding was no longer available; (8) coordinating with DVR, DMHDD, and other adult and community service agencies to assist with service provision for students with deaf-blindness; (9) coordinating with LEAs serving students with deaf-blindness; (10) coordinating with P.A.R.E.N.T.S. to assist in securing funding for DSI parent scholarships to Pathways; and, (11) collaborating with the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired (AER), Anchorage School District, University of Anchorage Alaska, and SESA to provide a course on Active Learning with Dr. Lilli Neilsen.

Outcomes and Challenges: Because of the sparse population and limited resources in Alaska, interagency coordination and collaboration must occur. As a result, DSI Services maximized resources by coordinating with local and state agencies.

3.1.5 ***Coordinate with national projects (e.g., TRACES, Hilton-Perkins, Helen Keller TAC, Helen Keller National Center, Deaf-Blind Link, American Federation for the Blind, SKI*HI Institute, etc.)***

Accomplishments: Throughout the grant cycle DSI Services coordinated and collaborated with national projects for technical assistance, support, trainings, and information including; (1) coordinating with SKI*HI in developing and providing INSITE training in Alaska; (2) coordinating with NTAC in providing support to parents and professionals to attend state and national meetings and conferences; (3) coordinating with NTAC regarding technical assistance activities, including census data; (4) coordinating with the National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFADB) by promoting involvement of Alaska's parents; (5) coordinating with Helen Keller National in meeting the needs of transition age students and promoting the need for an adult deaf-blind service provider in Alaska; (6) utilizing and referring others to Deaf-Blind Link as a resource for information about deaf-blindness; and, (7) coordinating with Hilton-Perkins, particularly concerning the involvement of DSI parents.

Outcomes and Challenges: DSI Services maximized its services through coordinating and collaborating with other national resources. One of the challenges in Alaska is the limited local resources in deaf-blindness. Through accessing national resources, this limitation was greatly lessened.

3.1.6 ***Collaborate with other state 307.11 Deaf-Blind Projects***

Accomplishments: Throughout the grant cycle DSI Services collaborated with other state Deaf-Blind Projects in developing and sharing resources and ideas including: (1) facilitating "cracker-barrel" sessions and sharing materials at the Project Director's meetings; (2) coordinating with other state deaf-blind projects when students move to their states; (3) disseminating materials produced by DSI Services to other states (e.g. newsletters, Usher brochure) and requesting information from other states for use by DSI Services; (4) coordinating with other states regarding trainings; and, (5) networking and sharing project information with other state projects at the Project Director's, NTAC meetings, national conferences, or through telephone and email.

Outcomes and Challenges: DSI Services maximized its services through sharing and collaborating with other state deaf-blind projects. One of the challenges in Alaska is the limited local resources in deaf-blindness. Maintaining contact with other projects assisted in lessening this and maximized resources among projects.

III. Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research

The primary focus of Alaska DSI Services was to provide technical assistance to improve service provider and family knowledge about effective practices for learners with deaf-blindness. Although data was collected throughout the project, the priority of the project remained at the technical assistance level.

The following are some of the effective practices used by DSI Services:

- **Site Visits**: Working directly at the site level with service providers and families enabled DSI staff to better understand and support local teams in designing and implementing programs. As each site had its own dynamics, culture, strengths, and challenges, site visits assisted DSI staff in providing personalized services for each individual.

- **Statewide Trainings with Stipend Support:** Each year at least one statewide training concerning deaf-blindness was coordinated by DSI Services. These trainings were typically 2-3 days. Topics were selected based on needs surveys and needs trends observed by DSI staff. Speakers were national experts in the field. Evening socials were also included to enable families and service providers to network. To make this training financially accessible, stipends were available to families and service providers to assist with air, lodging, and registration costs. University credit was also available. These trainings provided participants with comprehensive training specific to deaf-blindness, as well as encouraged networking and information sharing between families and service providers.

- **Home-School Partnerships:** Initially, the grant provided separate trainings for parents and service providers. However as the grant progressed, trainings evolved into including both parents and service providers enabling them to learn the information together. This partnership encouraged teams to collaboratively develop and implement action plans together.

- **Service Options:** DSI Services had an array of technical assistance options, which could be accessed by sites and districts. This might include more direct technical assistance such as site visits or support to attend trainings. On the other hand, it might include less direct approaches, such as using the SESA library or receiving mailings. Typically if a site had the local expertise, they tended to not need the site visit component. The degree and type of service was identified at the local level and indicated in the technical assistance agreement. DSI tended to be reactive to each sites' needs.

- **Topical Newsletters:** DSI developed and disseminated an informative, topical newsletter twice a year. *Keeping In Touch*, often included articles by parents and

service providers, as well as topical information, often pertaining to an upcoming training. This newsletter was mailed to approximately 275 readers and provided project awareness, as well as useful information.

- **Collaboration:** DSI collaborated with numerous local, state, and national agencies and organizations in order to maximize services. With limited fiscal resources and expertise in deaf-blindness, such collaboration was necessary. Examples of such collaboration included: utilizing the expertise of local service providers, including SESA staff; obtaining CSPD support to assist with speaker costs; coordinating with NTAC in developing state technical assistance plans; coordinating with NTAC/NFADB in supporting families to attend national trainings; coordinating with Hilton-Perkins in supporting service providers to attend national training, etc. It was through collaboration with various partners that DSI was able to maximize resources for the many service recipients.

Although DSI's priority remained at the service level, ongoing data was collected which could lend itself to further research. The annual deaf-blind census has a wealth of data regarding national demographics and trends concerning learners with deaf-blindness. Each year, this data is collected and analyzed by NTAC. It is a valuable source of information regarding deaf-blind demographics and trends and has provided data that has assisted with policy setting at the national level.

Appendix A

Workshops and Trainings

Evaluative Data

Workshops and Trainings

Evaluation Data

Numerous grant sponsored workshops occurred throughout the grant. These workshops were presented by project staff, professionals from Alaska, and professionals from outside of Alaska. With few exceptions, workshops were evaluated to determine effectiveness. Although different evaluations were occasionally used, the most predominant form was the *Workshop Evaluation Scale* (McCallan, E.). This scale included seven items that were rated on a Likert scale from 1 (poor) to 7 (excellent) and one yes/no response. The items are as follows:

1. The organization of the workshop was...
2. The objectives of the workshop were...
3. The work of the presenter was...
4. The ideas and activities of the workshop were...
5. The scope was...
6. My attendance at this workshop should prove...
7. Overall, I consider this workshop...
8. Do you need additional information...

The following chart summarizes a sample of the workshop evaluations.

Summary of Workshop Evaluations by Workshop Topic

Mean Responses

Workshop	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	
								Yes	No
INSITE	6.3	6.2	6.7	6.3	5.9	6	6.3	11	3
Planning Communication Systems for Learners with Dual Sensory Impairments	6.8	6.5	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.3	6.8	1	1
Hand in Hand	6.0	6.0	6.4	6.2	6.0	6.2	6.2	26	5
DeafBlind Individuals	6.0	6.0	6.4	6.0	6.3	5.6	6.1	5	1
Planning for Children with Dual Sensory Impairments	6.8	6.1	6.9	6.9	6.7	6.6	6.8	6	3
Cortical Vision Impairment	6.4	6.2	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3	9	5
Do You See What I See?	6.8	6.8	6.5	6.6	6.8	6.3	6.6	4	7
Do You Hear What I Hear?	6.5	6.6	6.7	6.6	6.3	6.3	6.4	1	3
Planning for Children with Dual Sensory Impairments	6.3	6.0	6.8	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	2	1
Encouraging Visual. . . .	5.8	5.9	6.1	6.0	5.9	5.9	5.9	11	9
Active Learning Approach	6.3	6.0	6.3	6.3	6.1	6.2	6.1	N/A	N/A

Appendix B

Satisfaction Surveys

SATISFACTION SURVEY

ALASKA DUAL SENSORY IMPAIRMENT (DSI) SERVICES

Compilation FY 96

	Yes	I Think So	Don't Know	I Don't Think So	No
Do you understand the services provided by the DSI program?	12 (71%)	5 (29%)			
Have the services been helpful?	16 (94%)	1 (6%)			

	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Does Not Apply
Please comment about any services received in the following areas:				
information received regarding dual-sensory impairments	15 (88%)	2 (12%)		
information about local, state, national resources	11 (6%)	5 (31%)		
home and/or school visits and consultations	15 (94%)	1 (6%)		
reports after visits	11 (6%)	4 (25%)		1 (6%)
follow-up to requests or activities	12 (71%)	4 (24%)		1 (6%)
telephone contact and/or	14 (88%)	2 (13%)		
assistance in child's home or school program	10 (71%)	2 (14%)		2 (14%)
workshops and training	12 (86%)	2 (14%)		
support to attend meetings, workshops, conferences, etc.	7 (54%)	4 (31%)		2 (15%)
networking opportunities	6 (40%)	7 (47%)		2 (13%)
Keeping in Touch newsletter	12 (52%)	1 (4%)		10 (43%)
library materials/equipment	3 (75%)	1 (25%)		
TOTAL:	128 (71%)	35 (19%)		18 (10%)

Additional Comments

	Yes	Sort Of	No	Does Not Apply
Please comment regarding services pro-vided by the DSI specialist:				
sensitive to you and your child's needs	15			
was knowledgeable and informative	15			
was available and accessible to you	15			
maintained contact	14			
was an effective resource	10			
TOTAL:	69 (100%)			

Satisfaction Surveys
Alaska Dual Sensory Impairment (DSI) Services

Compilation FY 97, 98, 99

	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Does Not Apply
1. Please comment about DSI services received in the following areas:				
a. information received regarding dual-sensory impairments	35 (81%)	6 (14%)		2 (5%)
b. information about local, state, national resources	23 (62%)	11 (30%)		3 (8%)
c. site visits and consultations	30 (73%)	5 (12%)		6 (15%)
d. student service reports after site visits	24 (62%)	4 (10%)	1 (3%)	10 (26%)
e. follow-up to requests or activities	28 (80%)	7 (20%)		
f. telephone contact and/or consultations	29 (73%)	8 (20%)		3 (8%)
g. assistance in child's home or school program	30 (77%)	7 (18%)		2 (5%)
h. workshops and trainings	28 (74%)	4 (11%)		6 (16%)
i. support to attend meetings, workshops, conferences, etc.	35 (90%)	1 (3%)		3 (7%)
j. networking opportunities	27 (61%)	11 (25%)		6 (14%)
k. *Keeping in Touch* newsletter	31 (76%)	9 (22%)		1 (2%)
l. overall DSI services received/program impact	32 (80%)	7 (18%)	1 (3%)	
m. other services	6 (67%)	2 (22%)		1 (11%)
	358 (74%)	82 (17%)	(0%)	43 (9%)

Appendix C

Action Plan Follow-Up Data

ALASKA DUAL SENSORY IMPAIRMENT (DSI) SERVICES

Action Plan Follow-up Data Compilation

	0	1	2
1. Degree of implementation of Action Plan (A.P.)	2 (7%)	21 (72%)	6 (21%)
2. Impact A.P. and/or training had on child(ren)	5 (17%)	14 (48%)	10 (34%)
3. Impact A.P. and/or training had on family(ies)	7 (25%)	13 (46%)	8 (29%)
4. Impact A.P. and/or training had on child(ren) education team(s)	5 (17%)	13 (45%)	11 (38%)
5. Impact A.P. and/or training had on you	1 (3%)	7 (24%)	21 (72%)
TOTAL:	20 (14%)	68 (47%)	56 (39%)

Key:

0 No Implementation/Impact

1 Partial Implementation/Impact

2 Full Implementation/Significant Impact

Action plan follow-up cards began in 1999 as a way to follow-up with participants and collect impact data. These cards were mailed out approximately 6-8 weeks after a training so that participants had time to implement their action plans. The results above compile data collected from two trainings: *Curriculum Adaptations for Inclusive Settings* (Dr. June Downing and Fran Maiuri) and *Active Learning for Individuals with Multiple Disabilities* (Dr. Lilli Nielsen).

Appendix D

Newsletter Sample

Alaska Dual Sensory Impairment Services

Keeping In Touch

An Alaskan newsletter for families, friends, and educators involved with infants, children and youth who have a dual-sensory impairment.

Spring 1999 SESA

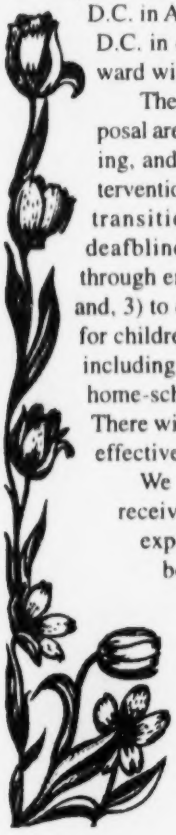
An Ending and Beginning...

Tulips and daffodils are trying to push through the ground after their long winter rest, only to be shocked by freezing temperatures and rain mixed with snow. Days are getting much longer, but the temperatures are still hovering in the 30s. We are poised at the crossroad when winter and spring are both competing. In the end, spring will briefly win for awhile, but in a heartbeat it will be winter again. I used to think of spring as a time for new beginnings. Now, I see it as both a beginning and an end. Particularly this year...

For the last month, DSI staff has been busy writing the new federal deafblind grant so that we can continue to provide technical assistance services to families and service providers throughout Alaska. It is a challenging task, because we are projecting needs and services for the next four years and reflecting back over the past four years to identify effective and ineffective services and activities. Input from our service recipients, as well as our own observations as service providers, helped guide us through this process. After drafting a proposal, which addressed federal priorities and Alaska's needs, we met with the DSI Advisory Board for input. The final proposal was sent to Washington, D.C. in April. Hopefully, we will hear back from D.C. in early summer, so that we can move forward with our plans.

"...the philosophy behind the approach of ACTIVE LEARNING is that, if given opportunity to learn from his own active exploration and examination, the child will achieve skills that become part of his personality, and so are natural for him to use in interaction with others and for fulfillment of his own needs, and will gradually make him to react relevantly to instructions and education, in other words to develop to be as independent as possible."

—Lilli Nielsen



The three primary goals in the new grant proposal are: 1) to provide technical assistance, training, and information that enhances the early intervention, special education, related services, and transition service needs of children with deafblindness; 2) to promote system change through enhancing local and state capacity in improving services for children with deafblindness and their families; and, 3) to develop and implement procedures to evaluate the impact of projects' activities on services and outcomes for children with deafblindness and their families. To accomplish these goals, an array of services will be available including site visits by DSI staff to work with teams, support for teams to attend training sessions, promotion of home-school partnerships, access to a parent navigator, an extensive lending library, and resources and information. There will be some new types of services available, and we will also continue to provide services that appeared to be effective during the past year.

We would like to thank each of you who took the time to write a letter of support for the services you have received. Some of you even shared your own stories as to how DSI has impacted you, your family, or a child experiencing DSI. These letters and stories provided some of the fuel which kept DSI staff burning candles at both ends in the grant writing process. Thank you...

Before we end this current grant cycle, we are co-sponsoring one more very exciting workshop with Dr. Lilli Nielsen. We encourage you to take advantage of this rare opportunity. Dr. Nielsen is from Denmark and is best known for her work and research with young children who are blind and experience multiple needs. She developed "The Little Room," as well as numerous other materials and techniques for some of our more challenging children who we have difficulty motivating.

See you at the conference!

Sara Gaar, DSI Services program supervisor

"Active Learning by Means of the Little Room: An Adaptation/Sharing of Lilli Nielsen's Work with Environmental Intervention with Young Children with Deafblindness"

By Gigi Newton and Stacy Shafer, Outreach Programs, Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Dr. Lilli Nielsen has worked as special education adviser at Refsnaesskolen, National Institute to Blind and Partially Sighted Children and Youth in Denmark since 1967. She was trained as a preschool teacher and psychologist. She has performed research in the area of spatial relations with infants who are congenitally blind and has written several books and articles about educating children with visual impairment and multiple disabilities. Dr. Nielsen's approach is called Active Learning. She has presented week-long training sessions on developing the full potential of young children with visual impairments and multiple disabilities in countries around the world.

All young children learn through play. They need to be encouraged to explore their environment and objects in their environment. Dr. Nielsen believes that all very young children learn by being active, rather than passive recipients of stimulation. We need to observe typical children to see how they learn to move their own bodies (raising their heads, reaching for objects, sitting up, etc.); use their bodies to explore their surroundings (including any and all objects within their surroundings); and actively participate in interactions with other people. A visual impairment can prohibit a child from having enough opportunities to develop these abilities and have these experiences without intervention. Dr. Nielsen encourages the adults to set up the child's environment so that s/he can do this.

Here are a few of Dr. Nielsen's recommendations when developing the child's environment:

- Observe the child. It is imperative that we know what the child can do, what activities s/he enjoys, what type of objects s/he likes, etc. Assessing the child's existing skills and preferences is the first step in programming. Observation will help you note the current developmental skills the child has. A child's preferences are indicators of the underlying strengths of her/his system. These preferences can guide you in the selection of objects and activities. You need to know a child's repertoire so you can notice change and improvement.

- Provide the child with more activities and objects that are similar to those s/he enjoys. This will encourage the child to explore and experience new things and broaden her/his knowledge base. Young children with visual impairments need to be encouraged to explore not only toys from the toy store, but also every day objects around the house.

- Give the child opportunities to practice and/or to compare. As adults, we are often tempted to remove materials as soon as the child show that s/he can use them. We all relate new information to things we already know. For example; the first time you successfully drove a car around the block you still needed lots more experiences driving in different environments, on different types of roads and highways, different vehicles, different times of the day and night, in different types of traffic, with the radio on and off, with friends in the car, etc. before you really mastered all the skills and concepts about driving. When a child begins to bang one object on another one, s/he needs to be given the opportunity to bang lots of different objects on lots of different surfaces. (The sound produced when banging a metal spoon on the couch is much different than banging it on the coffee table or a metal mixing bowl.) Children need to be able to repeat an action many, many times in order to learn.

- Provide a few materials and activities that are at a slightly higher developmental level to provide a challenge for the child, so s/he doesn't become bored. Only model these activities for the child. Do not expect him to imitate.

- Do not interrupt a child by talking when s/he is actively engaged in play. Most of us have had the experience of talking to an infant who is busily kicking her/his legs and having the child stop kicking to listen to our voice. When a child is exploring or playing with an object or practicing a new movement, we need to wait to talk with the child about what s/he is doing until s/he turns to us to share her/his experience, or at least until s/he takes a little break in the activity. This does not mean that we need to stop talking to our young children with visual impairments, just that we need to pick our moments.

- Slow down, when interacting with a child. We must be willing to wait and give the child time to take a turn in the interaction. When playing with a child, Dr. Nielsen tells us to give the child time to explore an object alone, rather than jumping in and showing her/him how to use it. At a conference during a child demonstration, Dr. Nielsen offered a battery operated facial brush to a child. She let

him explore the brush in his own way. He held the brush against various body parts, moved it from hand to hand, turned it over, put it on a tray, moved it against other objects on the tray, picked it back up, put it to his lips, and did many other things with it. Then he turned to Dr. Nielsen to share the experience. That was the moment she talked with him about the facial brush and the things he had done while playing with it.

- Let the child have control of her/his own hands. Dr. Nielsen feels it is important when we are interacting with a child who has a visual impairment that we do not take her/his hand and bring it to the materials. Instead, we need to develop alternate strategies for presenting objects to the child (e.g., gently touching the toy to the child's arm or leg to alert him/him of the object's presence, making noise with the object to arouse her/his curiosity and to encourage her/him to reach out, placing several objects that are touching the child's body or very close to it so any movements s/he might make will bring her/his body in contact with the object, etc.).

- Dr. Nielsen has developed several pieces of equipment to provide children with visual impairments the opportunities to actively participate with their environment. One of these "special environments" is the "Little Room" that is used in conjunction with the "Resonance Board."

The "Resonance Board" is made of 1/4 inch or 4 mm Birch plywood cut into either a 4'x4', 4'x5', 4'x6' or 150 cm x 150 cm. The board is raised up from the floor by fastening a 3/4" x 3/4" or 2x2 cm strip of wood along the edges of the bottom of the board. This raised board acts like a drumhead, vibrating in response to kicks, sounds, and arm movements that the child produces as s/he sit or lies on it.

The "Little Room" consists of a metal frame supporting three side panels of wood with various materials and textures and a Plexiglas ceiling from which a variety of objects which the child finds interesting and enjoyable are suspended. The "Little Room" is placed on top of the "Resonance Board."

The "Little Room" gives the child the opportunity to develop spatial concepts and to experience the properties of objects, to compare different objects, and try out different thing to do with the object on her/his own without adults interpreting that experience for her/him. Since the objects are stable, it allows the child to repeat her/his actions with an object as many times as s/he needs to, at one to two second intervals, without dropping and losing it. The immediate repetition enables the child to store the information gained from the experiences in her/his memory. Other possible benefits of using the "Little Room" might include: sensory integration, vocal play, use of vision, and improved motor and cognitive skills.

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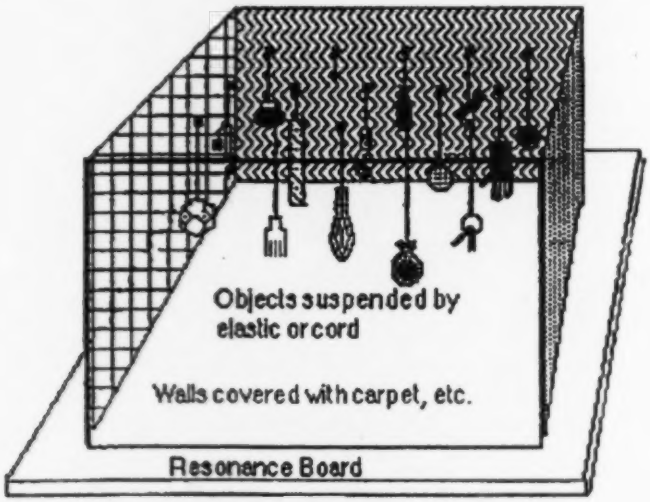

"Little Room" and Resonance Board

Active Learning for Individuals with Multiple Disabilities:

Innovative Interventions From Denmark

Special Guest Presenter

Lilli Nielsen, Ph.D

Refsnaesskolen, National Institute for Blind and partially Sighted Children and Youth Denmark

Mark your calendar and plan to attend Lilli Nielsen's innovative instructional seminar on "Active Learning" presented in Anchorage, Alaska, August 9-11, 1999.

Lilli Nielsen is internationally recognized for her work with young children who have visual and multiple needs. She has designed and researched innovative materials, methods, and equipment to help children actively explore their environment. Among her accomplishments, Dr. Nielsen developed the "Little Room" to help infants and young children with visual and multiple disabilities develop independent play, object exploration and manipulation, spatial relation, motor, and cognitive skills

Intended Audience

Teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists, diagnosticians, paraprofessionals, and parents involved with children who have significant multiple needs, including visually impaired and dual-sensory impaired (deafblind) are urged to attend.

For more information contact:
Special Education Service Agency
2217 E. Tudor Road, Suite 1
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This seminar is co-sponsored by:
Special Education Service Agency, Association for the Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind and Visually Impaired (Alaska Chapter), Alaska Dual Sensory Impairment Services, and the Anchorage School District.

Katlyn's Hope, Inc.

Katlyn's Hope, Inc. is a nonprofit organization established to assist in the education of deafblind children from around the world. Their Web site, <http://www.idir.net/~khope/>, is intended to inform you about their organization and the services they offer. Of particular interest to many people are the materials dealing with fundraising and financial assistance for families with deafblind children. Presently, the financial assistance application is not available from the Web, however, Shari Willis would be happy to mail one to you. Her email address is <khope@idir.net>.

This organization was established in loving memory of Katlyn, who was born June 29, 1995 with both a vision and hearing impairment. On February 7, 1996, Katlyn died from a respiratory virus RSV.

National Conference on Deafblindness Plenary Sessions

Plenary Sessions from the National Conference on Deafblindness (June 6-9, 1997) are available. This includes the written presentations of Harlan Lane, Barbara McLetchie, Marjaana Suosalmi, Sally Prouty, Stephen Perreault, and Charles Freeman.

Available through:

Perkins School for the Blind
Attn.: Christine Toney
175 North Beacon Street
Watertown, MA 02172

Also available for checkout through Alaska Dual Sensory Impairment Services.

1998-99 Dual Sensory Impaiment Services

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Encouraging Exploration

Children with deafblindness need to be encouraged to explore their environment using all their senses. This exploration will help the child build skills in all areas of development.

You can encourage the child to explore his surroundings in the following ways:

1. Remove dangerous and valuable objects from the area, so the child will not fear getting hurt or getting in trouble. If you need to say "No" too many times, the child may not want to explore further.

2. Attach objects to the child's chair, car seat, stroller or wheelchair to allow contact with objects. They can be placed next to the child's body without touching his hands or face. The child may just allow them to be there at first and later will explore them with his hands.

3. Games with objects can also be played, placing objects inside the child's clothing to encourage the child to search for the object. Be sure to avoid those very sensitive areas of the child's body and begin the games with body parts where he allows touch.

4. Place objects a few inches away from the child's hands to make it easier for him to find the objects. He may accidentally bump into it and explore it further.

5. Combine the use of senses by adding light to noisemakers, vibration to sound, and interesting textures to brightly colored objects to encourage the child to use his remaining vision or hearing. An example would include feeling the vibration of a piano, placing a musical toy on a lighted surface, etc. These added senses will help to attract the child's attention.

Reprinted from California Deaf-Blind Services. Adapted from Sternberg-White, S., Chen, D., Watts, J., 1992, Developing Social-Emotional Skills, INSITE, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

Reflections of Trainings

Editor's Note: Participants involved in trainings organized by Alaska Dual Sensory Impairment Services are asked to react to information they have learned and/or provide a "story" about how the training has impacted the life of a child with a dual sensory impairment. We were fortunate to have Fran Maiuri and June Downing present at ASSEC, February 1999. Below are thoughts on the training.

As always, this pre-conference training was great. As a team, we came up with several new ways to include our student in the regular education classroom. Having the weekend to be together and spend quality time thinking and problem solving, just for our student, was very beneficial. It is rare to have the opportunity to spend so much focused time on one student!

Belinda Burns, speech/language pathologist, Juneau

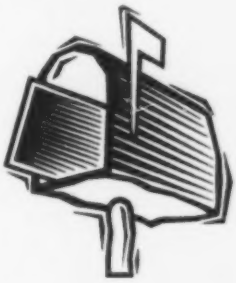
We were able to think of some very innovative ways to integrate our student without losing the integrity of his current goals and programs. We were especially able to appreciate and use ideas to build on our student's emerging sorting skills to make math problems, during math time in the regular class, for his peers.

Deb Gill, special education teacher, Juneau

The training provided by Fran Maiuri and June Downing gave me a wealth of ideas. We returned home eager to begin immediate implementation of as many new ideas as possible. We created materials like a schedule book and alphabet letters for the student to use. We met with the classroom teacher and instructional aide and completed an activity matrix to ensure that the child's objectives were integrated into the regular classroom. This has worked quite well and has made the inclusion of the child go more smoothly. This training also benefited another student.

Diane George, special education teacher, and Elena Charles, instructional aide, Yupiit School District

Having several team members in attendance at this conference, allowed us to:



- hear the same information;
- step away from day-to-day responsibilities in order to focus on specific students;
- objectively review our student's current programs, while seeing and hearing how others also succeed and struggle;
- consider ideas presented, while keeping each student in mind;
- jointly discuss, select, plan and develop areas/activities/materials to manageably change within the students' programs now;
- fill our minds and notebooks with strategies, which will enhance each student's program.

This was such a refreshing and encouraging presentation due to June's presenting skills, the materials she chose to share, and how she chose to share them.

Donna McKinley, vision specialist, Juneau

I was quite please that this training emphasized the students with fairly significant impairments who are included in regular classrooms. It was also neat to see that elementary, middle school, and high school students with significant disabilities were discussed and viewed through videos. Having actual samples of modified materials and communication tools was great. I came away with many ideas for the target student as well as several other students. A barrier still remains in many classrooms where there is a distinction between "the" students and "my" students. Only when this barrier is gone will students achieve maximum success through full inclusion and access to all parts of the curriculum. I left this session feeling enthusiastic and energized, ready to go back and make a difference.

Jan Elkinton, special education teacher, Juneau

The training was very helpful in that it provided a lot of specific examples of how to include children with a high degree of involvement. Calendar boxes that are tactile, peer in-

volvement and new ways to look at matrices will all be specifically helpful with the student I am currently working with who has a dual sensory impairment. Many other ideas, particularly for communication boards, were presented that will be helpful for working with other students I work with. I left feeling excited to strive to incorporate even more into children's programs.

Morgan Humphreys Davis, physical therapist, Juneau

The training was very effective, partly because the material was absorbing and useful, and also because Dr. Downing and Fran Maiuri were engaging, energetic speakers and make a good team. Attending with the mother of the child I serve was invaluable—we gained enormously from sharing reactions, ideas, and experiences. This can not help but benefit the student.

Ideas I learning in the training allow peers to be much more interactive with the student. The effect has been to involve the student more completely in class activities, and to involve peers more with him.

Sue May, instructional aide, Anchorage School District

This newsletter was prepared by:
Sara J. Gaar and Marilyn A. Stack ---------- Editors
Jennifer Risse ---------- Production Specialist

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Conferences and Workshops

What: *"Educating Children with Special Health Care Needs"*
When: June 14-15, 1999, Idaho Falls
June 16-17, 1999, Boise
Where: Idaho
Contact: Robin Greenfield, Ph.D., Idaho Project for Children and Youth with Deafblindness, Center on Disabilities and Human Devel opment, University of Idaho, Tel. 208-364-4012, email: rgreen@uidaho.edu

What: *"Shared Experiences: Increasing Literacy and Communication Opportunities"*
When: June 25, 1999
Where: Hershey Holiday Inn, Harrisburg
Contact: Nancy Lehr, Pennsylvania Deafblind Project, Tel. 717-541-4968 ext. 3115

What: *12th Annual Deafblind International (DBI) Conference*
"Developing Through Relationships: Celebrating Achievement"
When: July 20-25, 1999
Where: Centro Escolar Turistico e Hoteleiro, Estoril, Lisbon
Contact: Casa Pia de Lisboa / CAACF, Av. Do Restelo, 1 1400, Lisboa, Portugal, Tel. 351-1-362-71-35, Fax 351-1-363-34-48, email: cpl.educa.@mail.telepac.pt , Web site: http://www.arrakis.es/~apascide/axxiidbi.htm

What: *The 1999 Summer Institute on Deafblindness*
"See / Hear: Assessment and Program Strategies to Encourage Sensory Learning"
When: August 2-4, 1999
Where: Breckenridge, Colorado
Contact: Tanni Anthony, Tel. 303-866-6681

What: *"Active Learning for Individuals with Multiple Disabilities: Innovative Interventions from Denmark—Lilli Nielsen"*
When: August 9-11, 1999
Where: Anchorage, Alaska
Contact: Special Education Service Agency, 2217 E. Tudor Road, Suite 1, Anchorage, AK 99507, Tel. 562-7372, email: lilli@sesa.org

What: *7th Biennial Pathways Conference*
When: October 17-19, 1999
Where: Sheraton Anchorage Hotel, Alaska
Contact: Carol Kane, Tel. 907-746-9300, email: aassp@alaska.net

What: *17th Annual Closing The Gap Conference*
When: October 21-23, 1999
Where: Minneapolis, Minnesota
Contact: Closing The Gap, 526 Main Street, PO Box 68, Henderson, MN 56044, Tel. 507-248-3294, Fax 507-248-3810, email: info@closingthegap.com, Web site: www.closingthegap.com

1999 Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Campaign

Each year the Helen Keller National Center celebrates the Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Campaign. The 1999 campaign focuses on the employment of deafblind people who are skilled, motivated, hard-working, and reliable employees. The campaign kicks off in June (Helen's birth date is June 27) and continues throughout the year. During the month of June, and especially during the week of June 27-July 3, citizens, organizations, civic groups, libraries, schools, and agencies are encouraged to plan state and local activities. If you are interested in doing something in your community, please contact Alaska Dual Sensory Impairment Services at (907)562-7372.

The DSI staff hope you have a safe and fun-filled summer.

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